How Do the Urban Poor Survive? A Comparative Ethnography of Subsistence Strategies in Argentina, Ecuador, and Mexico

Maricarmen Hernández¹ · Samuel Law² · Javier Auyero³

Accepted: 15 June 2021 / Published online: 11 September 2021

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2021

Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic data collected in three informal communities, one in Argentina, one in México, and one in Ecuador, we address the long-standing question posed by Larissa Lomnitz's and Carol Stack's now-classic studies of how impoverished people not only survive but what strategies they adopt in an attempt to build a dignified life. By focusing on the diversity of strategies by which the urban poor solve the everyday problems of individual and collective reproduction, we move beyond the macro-level analysis of structural constraint and material deprivation. Our findings show a remarkable continuity in the difficulties residents of these informal communities confronted and the problem-solving strategies they resorted to. We found that networks of kin and friends continue to play a crucial role in how poor people not only survive but attempt to get ahead. Additionally, we highlight the role of patronage networks and collective action as central to strategies by which the urban poor cope with scarcity and improve their life chances, while also paying close attention to ways in which they deal with pressing issues of insecurity and violence. The paper shows that poor people's survival strategies are deeply imbricated in routine political processes.

Keywords Political sociology · Informal communities · Network ties · Survival strategies · Latin America · Ethnography

The authors are grateful to activists and residents of Esmeraldas, Ecuador, La Madera, Argentina, and Acapatzingo, Mexico for opening their homes, spending time, and sharing stories with them. We are also grateful to Matthew Desmond, Mario Small, Forrest Stuart, Jennifer Scott, and Loïc Wacquant who commented on sections of this paper. We thank Qualitative Sociology editors Claudio Benzecry and Andrew Deener and anonymous reviewers.

✉ Maricarmen Hernández
mhv@unm.edu

Introduction

Roughly half a century after anthropologist Larissa Lomnitz and sociologist Carol Stack published their empirical research on the urban poor relational survival strategies (Lomnitz 2014; Stack 1983), the line of empirical inquiry they launched is still quite vigorous throughout the Americas (Burwell 2004; Camargo Sierra 2020; Desmond 2012; 2017; Edin and Lein 1997; Eguía and Ortale 2007; Fernández-Kelly 2015; González de la Rocha 2001; 2020; Harvey 2011; Jarrett et al. 2014; Lubbers et al. 2020; Newman 2020; Raudenbush 2016; Sánchez-Jankowski 2016; Small 2004; Small and Gose 2020; Svampa 2005). Alongside networks of reciprocal exchange, research in Latin America has examined patronage or clientelistic networks and contentious collective action as prominent ways of obtaining basic needs such as housing, food, and medicine among the urban poor (Álvarez-Rivadulla 2017; Fischer and McCann 2014; Holland 2017; Holston 2009; Perez 2018a, b; Rossi 2017).¹

This paper looks beyond well-studied cases in the United States to empirically dissect these two modes of coping with economic destitution, both synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, by comparing and contrasting three different marginalized neighborhoods in Argentina, Ecuador, and Mexico. Diachronically, by examining residents' strategies ranging from the neighborhoods' origins to the present day. Focusing on patronage and protest has two analytic advantages: a) it brings politics (defined as "interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties" (Tilly 2008)) back into discussions of subsistence (Phillips 2018; Small 2004); and b) it blurs the boundary between merely staying afloat and making progress, between making ends meet and striving for upward mobility out of poverty (in Marx's classic terms, between simple and expanded reproduction).

Research on relational survival strategies in the Americas has overlooked interpersonal violence as an omnipresent threat in poor people's daily lives. In response to daily danger, this paper shows residents of marginalized neighborhoods come up with a variety of strategies: from relying on their close family circles to counting on community-based informal control to mounting a collective and organized response to "*la inseguridad*."

Academic conversations about the livelihood strategies of the urban poor should simultaneously attend to how they obtain material resources and how they deal with interpersonal violence. In this paper, we will examine the many, individual and collective ways, in which poor residents access land and housing, obtain food, and manage bodily risks. As we will see, though (mostly informal) work is the mainstay of their subsistence, poor people make ends meet, seek to improve their lives, and stay out of harm's way through a varying combination of collective organizing, contentious collective action, patronage networks, direct state aid, and networks of reciprocity.

¹ Following most of the recent literature on the subject, we here use clientelist and patronage politics as interchangeable terms (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Levitsky 2003).

The first part of this paper reviews the scholarship on poor people's subsistence strategies paying particular attention to the role played by networks of reciprocal exchange, patronage and protest. Although there is a vast and excellent scholarship in other parts of the world (Bayat 2013; Cammett 2014; Evans 2020; Nunzio 2019; Singerman 1995), we focus our review on the work done during the last two decades in the Americas. The second part of this paper introduces our sites and methods. The main section of this paper is divided in three sub-sections where we present the findings from three poor barrios; the first located in Esmeraldas (Ecuador), the second in Buenos Aires (Argentina), and the third in Mexico City (Mexico). In the discussion section we compare and contrast the cases and draw some general conclusions regarding the deep imbrication of poor people's strategies in ordinary political processes, and the still central place occupied by local reciprocity networks in helping the most economically vulnerable to cope with street violence.

Networks of Reciprocity, Patronage, and Protest

In the Introduction to her ethnography of the politics of hunger, anthropologist Kristin Phillips notes that today many social scientists and policy experts "use concepts such as 'livelihood,' 'capabilities,' and 'resilience' instead of 'subsistence' to signal our interest not just in the physical but in the social, economic, environmental, and political dimensions of well-being too" (2018, 8). She raises a note of caution against the use of those concepts because they risk losing sight "of the very specific space in which physical persistence is insecure, and of what happens in this space that shapes political forms, social experience, and human economies. It is not enough to look simply at physiological life and death. But nor should we forget the materiality of poverty" (8). As we inspect the individual and collective ways in which the poor in Latin America obtain their plots of land, construct their homes, build common infrastructure, fight collectively for public facilities, and procure their sustenance, our analysis highlights the material aspects of poverty. As we also examine the relational ways in which they navigate street violence, our analysis signals a shared concern about poor people's physical persistence – though in slightly different, but not contradictory, sense to the one given by Phillips.

How do the poor obtain food and shelter? In their now-classic studies, Stack (1983) and Lomnitz (1993; 2014) came up with quite similar answers. They both observed that social networks based on residence and kinship function as a surrogate social security system for the poor in the U.S. and in Mexico. "The basic insecurity of marginal existence," according to Lomnitz (1993; 89), "can be compensated in only one way: by generating mechanisms of economic solidarity, based on the full mobilization of the social resources of the individual." Networks of mutual aid are "defined by the flow of reciprocal exchange of goods, services, and economically valuable information" (91). Residents of The Flats, the Black community studied by Carol Stack (1983), also relied on a large web of kin and friends within which they swapped goods and services that helped them in their everyday life. Both in Cerrada del Condor and in The Flats, a powerful ethic of reciprocity governed those

exchanges. North and south of the US-Mexico border, networks of mutual help were understood as the relational foundations of poor people's life strategies.

To what extent proximate networks of reciprocity with neighbors and kin still help the poor make ends meet today has been the subject of much critical scrutiny (Desmond 2012; González de la Rocha 2020; Lubbers et al. 2020; Newman 2020; Raudenbush 2020). Lubbers et al. (2020) provide a recent comprehensive review where they assess three different, though in their view potentially complementary, perspectives on the extent and operation of networks of reciprocal help among the urban poor (what they call “pervasive solidarity,” “pervasive isolation,” and “selective solidarity”). The first perspective emphasizes, along the lines studied by Lomnitz and Stack, the consistent use of family, kin, and friendship networks to acquire needed resources. The norm of reciprocity rules over these exchanges and mutual trust is pervasive within networks. Those who ascribe to the perspective of “pervasive isolation” underscore the erosion of these networks over time, and the atomization of marginalized men and women (for the case of Mexico, see González de la Rocha 2020). In the third perspective, solidarity and trust can co-exist with isolation and mistrust – they work as frames that can be alternatively used depending on context and situation (Raudenbush 2016).²

The three cases we analyze in this paper, all from present-day Latin America, show that networks of mutual aid played a key role in the past and are still operative in the present. They served to spread information among relatives, friends, and acquaintances and to organize squatters at the time of the original land invasion (the three neighborhoods under study originated as squatter settlements). Through these networks, much like in Lomnitz's case, residents came to work together to clear the land, open up streets, dig trenches, and establish neighborhood soup-kitchens, among other activities. Networks of mutual aid are still active today: it is through them that people obtain information about food distribution in local churches, state agencies, and other community organizations.

However our three cases also show that these networks rarely work autonomously. They are, to varying degrees in each case, supported by and/or embedded in other local and extra-local networks and organizations. Our empirical cases support Small and Gose's (2020) assertion that, although poor men and women do create and sustain networks of reciprocity, organizations in which people routinely interact with others play a fundamental role in the production and reproduction of said webs of mutual help. According to Small and Gose, organizations such as “workplaces, churches, childcare centers, schools, soup kitchens, gyms, bars, neighborhood restaurants, and community centers” (90) are useful in brokering “social connections outside of the family” (92). Our findings show that other types of organizations

² These differences may, according to Lubbers et al (2020, 17), “be explained by the characteristics of the populations under study (e.g., single mothers, evicted tenants, the working poor, recent immigrants, homeless drug users, the downwardly mobile, each with varying degrees of economic needs), by the macro-level conditions under which they were studied (e.g., different welfare structures, family structures, and levels of geographical mobility), or perhaps even by the various research methods.”

- those linked to political parties, to social movements, and to activist networks
- fulfill a key role in poor people's life strategies.

In poor and working-class neighborhoods, shantytowns, and squatter settlements, many residents solve their pressing problems, such as securing access to jobs, state welfare, food, and medicine, through patronage networks that rely on brokers as key actors. Known as *precinct captains* in Chicago during the 1920s (Auyero 2000; Auyero and Benzecry 2017; Guterbock 1980; Zorbaugh 1983), *punteros* in contemporary Argentina (Szwarcberg 2015; Vommaro and Combes 2019; Zarazaga 2014), and *caciques* in Mexico at the time Lomnitz conducted her fieldwork (see also Cornelius 1975)³ brokers act as gatekeepers. Patronage networks are problem-solving networks (Auyero 2000) that operate as webs of resource allocation. Zarazaga (2014, 33; see also 2017) provides a detailed list of the resources such networks distribute among the Argentine poor: “jobs, workfare programs, food, medicine, clothes, shoes, coffins, school materials, appliances, bricks, zinc sheets, cash, marijuana and other illegal drugs” (Zarazaga 2014, 33).

Social movements and other more episodic forms of (more or less contentious) collective action are also central elements in how poor people seek to meet their basic needs. The scholarship on squatting as a collective housing strategy in Latin America is vast (Fischer et al. 2014; Massidda 2018; Murphy 2014; Schneider 1995) – and it ranges from squatting organizational dynamics (Cravino and Vommaro 2018; Merklen 1991) to its relationship to democratic citizenship (Holston 2009). Classic (Collier 1976) and more recent work (Álvarez-Rivadulla 2017) carefully documents the variety of responses that political parties and government throughout the region have had toward illegal squatting (from repression, to encouragement, neglect, and forbearance – or a combination thereof) (Holland 2017; Schneider 1995).

Land occupations are certainly not the only kind of transgressive collective action that the Latin American poor engage in. Sociologist Fahlberg et al. (2020) recently reviewed various strategies that the Latin American poor use to obtain jobs, education, health services, housing and public infrastructure in Cidade de Deus, a well-known low-income neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. These strategies range from the more or less disruptive forms of collective contention to the more individualistic actions – such as “making a ruckus” at the health clinic or E.R. to receive care, or the reliance on a personal connection to a pharmacist who would give antibiotics without prescription (analogous to what Raudenbush describes in the U.S.) (2020). To mention a few recent examples: Sociologists Perez (2018a, b) and Rossi (2017) examine poor people's transgressive forms of protest (in particular the staging of roadblocks) to demand the distribution of social assistance (foodstuffs and workfare programs) in Argentina, and Abello Colak et al. (2014) review community initiatives to fight for housing, infrastructure, food security (community gardens) in

³ Although they were not present in Cerrada del Condor, this was “not typical of Mexico City squatter settlements” (Lomnitz 1993, 186). In poor areas of the Mexican urban periphery, a *cacique* “control(ed) vital resources (land, water, work protection) and therefore enjoy(ed) a broad local following as well as personal relations with politicians and officials” (186).

Medellín. The urban poor throughout Latin America, this line of research shows, deploy a wide range of forms of collective action – from highly transgressive to less disruptive, and usually a combination of both.

Patronage politics have been traditionally understood as separate from (and antagonistic to) most forms of collective action. The vertical and asymmetrical relationships between the poor, their brokers, and their patrons are conceptualized as the exact opposite of the horizontal ties that serve as the necessary precondition for either episodic or more sustained forms of collective action (i.e., social movements) (Auyero et al. 2009; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). In most of the scholarship on the topic, patronage inhibits collective action (for recent exceptions, see Álvarez-Rivadulla 2017; Lapegna 2016). As we will see in two of the case studies that follow, patronage politics and collective action are neither opposed nor contradictory phenomena. Instead, they are dynamic processes that oftentimes establish recursive, and sometimes mutually reinforcing, relations (Tilly 2008), and serve, alongside networks of reciprocal exchange, as strategies to solve daily problems and improving living conditions.

Safety Networks and Informal Organizations

Ethnographic and qualitative studies in poor neighborhoods in the Americas describe the widespread fear of violent victimization felt by their residents on a daily basis (Moser and McIlwaine 2000; Rodgers et al. 2012; Salahub et al. 2018; Sharkey 2018; Wilding 2012). Auyero and Berti (2015) report on the fortification of homes in shantytowns and squatter settlements as one way of coping with increasing violence. Regular seclusion inside homes is one typical way of avoiding violence. Residents’ “cloistering” (McCurn 2020) includes the keeping of regular timetables and strict curfews (Auyero and Kilanski 2015; Vega et al. 2019).

When residents of poor marginalized areas venture into public spaces, they rely on local, tactical knowledge to keep a minimum degree of safety (Harding 2010; Penglase 2014). Information about the time, place, circumstances, and potential perpetrators of violence travels through local networks, sometimes in the form of gossip, serving residents to navigate treacherous public spaces (Sánchez-Jankowski 2016). This context-specific knowledge is not merely a diagrammatic representation of risky places and times, but one that informs concrete actions – from “hood hopping” (lying about your neighborhood of origin to avoid a fight with a youngster from another neighborhood) (Harding 2010) to active ignorance, or intentionally not hearing or seeing what people involved in local criminal activities say or do. Another concrete, precautionary action among poor residents – both young and old – is traveling in groups. Seeking the protection of others who “have your back,” and preventing others from “messing” with you, is common among youth in poor neighborhoods of Boston (Harding 2010) and Buenos Aires (Auyero and Berti 2015).

Thus, although it is certainly true that community violence breeds isolation (Pearce 2019; Perlman 2011; Vega et al. 2019), evidence from marginalized communities throughout the Americas shows that it also generates routines (i.e., regular, somewhat predictable, courses of action) that require connectivity within the

household (as when there's a need to coordinate who stays and who leaves, and who goes with whom to the bus stop), and among friends and acquaintances (as when youngsters jointly organize their outings).

Case studies also show that poor residents rely on (more or less legal, more or less formal) collective action and local institutions to protest against and to cope with surrounding violence. Direct justice in the form of lynching (Adams 2017; Goldstein 2012; Godoy 2006; Müller 2016; Ugarte and Derpic 2013) or vigilantism is certainly a recourse in some poor urban communities in Latin America. But other non-violent ways of coping with danger have also been documented empirically. Abello Colak et al. (2014), for example, describe a variety of community initiatives (among them cultural and sporting events) to peacefully contest and prevent violence in Medellín, Colombia. The case studies presented below scrutinize the relational and collective forms of coping with lack of public safety.

Methods

This paper offers three analytic reconstructions of the strategies poor residents rely upon to solve their need for shelter, food, and safety. It draws on three independent research projects in Argentina, Ecuador, and México.

Maricarmen Hernández conducted 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2015 and 2018 in 50 Casas, an informal neighborhood located in Esmeraldas, Ecuador. During her fieldwork, she lived with a family who were long-time residents of the neighborhood. She actively participated in daily life by attending neighborhood meetings and serving as an administrator for a local work cooperative, organizing soccer tournaments, and volunteering at an afterschool care program and at the local health clinic. Additionally, she conducted 72 in-depth interviews with neighborhood residents and leaders. The interviews lasted between 25 and 80 min and covered personal/life history, housing trajectory, general feelings about the neighborhood, change over time, health concerns, major problems and problem solving, and future hopes/concerns.

Hernández has kept up with life in the neighborhood during the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine lockdowns via Whatsapp and social media messaging. These calls with key neighborhood organizers and long-time residents have yielded data on the difficulties of life through pandemic restrictions, food scarcity, and the strife of quarantine in crowded and precarious spaces.

Javier Auyero has been conducting team ethnographic fieldwork in La Matera (Argentina) since March 2019 focusing on patronage networks, subsistence politics, and daily violence. Sofía Servián, Auyero's research partner, lives in a low-income neighborhood two blocks away from La Matera where many of her relatives reside. Before March of 2020, when a massive lockdown was ordered in Argentina, she visited friends, family, and interviewees on a weekly basis. We draw on 35 in-depth interviews (average two hours long) and on Servián's field diary. Since March 2020, she has been following up with research contacts, friends, and family via WhatsApp, and has conducted fifteen additional interviews, in which she focused on how families obtain food during the pandemic.

Sam Law began preliminary ethnographic research in Acapatzingo (Mexico) in 2019 focusing on how autonomous practices of organization and collective action are used as a strategy by the poor to deal with conditions of urban precarity. Through participant observation in the Summer of 2019 and early winter of 2020, he attended community meetings and celebrations, participated in collective labor, gathered community archival material, and visited community members for meals in their homes and walks through the community. His account here of the community's strategies for addressing the needs for shelter, food and security draws on archival material, fieldnotes, and nine oral histories with residents and community leaders. While initially delayed due to the pandemic, he is currently conducting long-term ethnographic fieldwork.

Due to space restrictions, we were unable to present a full ethnographic account of each field site where we collected data. Thus, we decided to privilege the “telling” over the “showing” in some sections of the paper, as a way to keep the narrative flow. We present more ethnographic and interview data in the sections on shelter in 50 Casas, on food in La Matera, and on safety in Acapatzingo. Conversely, in all the other sub-sections, we sought to strike a balance between presenting detailed ethnographic accounts and summarizing our data.

Findings

50 Casas, Esmeraldas, Ecuador

50 Casas is an informal neighborhood in the coastal city of Esmeraldas, Ecuador. The neighborhood is officially named *Cooperativa Río Teaone*, but more informally referred to as 50 Casas, which translates to 50 Houses, for the number of families that were originally established there. By 2015, approximately 2,700 people lived in the neighborhood, with at least half of all residents under the age of 18. Most homes that line the winding unpaved streets of the neighborhood are of mixed-construction materials such as cinder blocks, cement, wood, and sheet metal roofs. While 50 Casas may resemble other informal communities in the south side of the city of Esmeraldas, with its dirt roads and brightly painted homes built close together, it is different from other *barrios* in its proximity to the petrochemical complex that has operated in Esmeraldas since the late 1970s (Fig. 1).

The majority of the residents are Black Ecuadorians. Although no official figures exist for the neighborhood, unemployment and underemployment are significantly higher than the state and national median. A substantial number of neighborhood residents work informally in construction, shrimp farming, or domestic labor, which includes childcare, home cleaning, and laundry service. Residents of 50 Casas have adopted a variety of strategies to secure shelter, obtain food, and deal with insecurity. Their use of strategies has ranged throughout the years, depending on their needs and resources at the time, but they have always relied on some form of contentious collective action, mutual aid and patronage networks, as well as some form of state aid.

Fig. 1 A muddy, unpaved street in the 50 Casas neighborhood in Esmeraldas, Ecuador

Shelter

The first settlers of the 50 Casas neighborhood hailed from different areas around the city center, but they were all victims of landslides and floods that had destroyed their homes in 1998. The city had grown disproportionately through the 1980s, and following a trend that has been observed throughout urban centers in the global south (Fischer et al. 2014), impoverished families took to the hills in search of land where they could build a home. The *El Niño* climatic phenomenon of 1998 brought rainstorms that caused huge landslides and destroyed dozens of homes built on steep hillsides. Displaced families were transported to emergency shelters set up in unused school and government buildings, where they spent months in crowded and unsanitary conditions waiting for government assistance. Assistance from the state finally arrived in the form of a relocation program that offered the families a donated cane and palm home in an uninhabited area in the south of the city. The first settlers of the neighborhood recall that the area was completely unfit for habitation, lacking basic services and infrastructure, and for its location right by the petrochemical complex. Yet, life in the shelters was unbearable, and some families decided to participate in the relocation program.

The Ministry of Housing coordinated the disaster relief effort and offered 50 families a plot of land and a donated home. The families who accepted the offer had to clear and level their own plots of land, they were barred for using the land for commercial or rental purposes, and they had to agree to a legalization process—which included paying property taxes—so they could keep their *derecho de posesión*, a document allowing them to legally occupy the land, and obtain legal titles after a

two-year tenure. Over time, this legalization process broke down and was ultimately unsuccessful.

When the first relocated families arrived, they immediately went to work clearing their plots and preparing to receive the donated homes. Leti, a long-time resident of the neighborhood recalled that the place was a jungle when they arrived, “with so many plants and weeds everywhere that it took days on end to clear our plots using machetes, we also had to carve out little trails for entering and leaving the neighborhood. It was terribly dark at night! And with so many animals and insects, it was difficult and dangerous.” The donated homes the disaster victims received were constructed out of sugar cane and curated palm, and each sat on stilts, approximately six feet above the ground. This type of architecture was generally ideal for areas prone to flooding. Because the ground was so soft in this location, the stilts made the houses unstable, and they often required reinforcements. Reinforcing and restructuring these homes was an arduous process that took years, especially due to the residents’ minimal resources. A common way for residents of the neighborhood to reinforce and expand their homes was to organize *mingas* with their relatives and neighbors, whenever they had saved up enough for construction materials. *Mingas* are a traditional form of mobilizing social labor by means of systems of reciprocity. *Mingas* were also a common way to take on infrastructural projects in the neighborhood, given the state’s relative absence in the area. During the early years of the neighborhood, neighbors recall often working together to level the neighborhood’s main road and clear vegetation and help each other build up their homes.

Soon after the arrival of the first relocated families, additional parts of the neighborhood were settled through a series of land invasions. These settlers eked out plots and began building houses along the river banks and around a lagoon located toward the back of the neighborhood. Many of those who participated in the invasions were also disaster victims who had lost their homes to landslides but had not been part of the relocation program due to its limited capacity and funds. They had heard about the program while they were in the shelters and had decided to follow on their own. Those who participated in the invasions had a more difficult time obtaining the document allowing them to legally live on the land, thus they quickly organized to keep each other safe from eviction.

Residents found it necessary to organize at the neighborhood-level soon after their arrival in the area. They faced many challenges in making the area livable, from acquiring basic services, to keeping each other safe, and defending their plots from outsiders. Their organizing has been cyclical throughout the years, with periods of high mobilization activity and others in which collective action slowed down, but ultimately, it was this collectivity that helped the community face the many challenges of building a life under such difficult conditions. Their organizing was usually in response to problems, or crises, that arose, of which there were many in the earlier phases of the neighborhood.

Fast-forward 20 years from the initial settlement and invasions in 1998, and what we find is a thriving community with over 2,700 residents and access to some services such as public transportation and electricity. After many years of collective struggle, organizing, and protesting, the neighbors have made the place livable, an achievement they take pride in. As documented in other cases of early stages of

squatting throughout the region and in other Latin American cities, the experience of enduring harsh conditions upon arrival and extensive labor to build up the area is common, as is the widespread proclivity to aspire to home ownership over renting (Burgwal 2003; Fischer and McCann 2014).

Food

Most families in the neighborhood rely on wages earned in the informal labor market, such as shrimp fishing in the mangroves, construction work for men, and domestic work for women. Their reality is dictated by what they call “*el diario*,” which translates to “the daily,” referring to their daily earnings. Their experience of living day-to-day is quite literal, and the social organization of the neighborhood reflects that. For example, myriad storefronts operate out of homes that sell small amounts of everything from staple food items, to beauty products, and school materials. Fruits and vegetables are even sold in parts, such as half an onion and a third of a papaya, to accommodate for the neighborhood’s day-to-day domestic economy.

It is common practice for children to be sent to the neighborhood store each day to buy the necessary ingredients for that day’s meal. Many of these stores also offer credit to their trusted clients, creating a safety net for families who rely on the volatility of their daily earnings. Another common practice is food sharing between neighbors, relatives, and friends. On many occasions I heard Zula, a neighborhood leader I lived with during fieldwork, say, “we’re poor, but nobody goes hungry here” while preparing a heaping plate of food for a neighbor or friend who had been down on their luck. Additionally, residents sometime host neighbors’ children in their homes for lunch or dinner. This was another common practice in which families whose economy was more stable would help feed the children of those who are having a difficult time.

State assistance also plays an important role in the lives of the poorest families in the neighborhood through “*el bono popular*,” the Ecuadorian state’s welfare payment. Although the residents have two main complaints about the program: 1. To be eligible, one must be absolutely destitute, and not everyone in the neighborhood is, and 2. Those who are beneficiaries cannot possibly make ends meet with the \$60-dollar monthly payments provided by the program.⁴ Beneficiaries tend to be single-parent households, usually single-mothers, who cannot work outside the home due to their child-care responsibilities.

Forms of patronage in which the state becomes an important presence also exist in the neighborhood, especially after moments of crisis such as after disastrous events or before upcoming elections. In the first case, resources and aid provided by the state are often distributed to residents through particular neighborhood leaders; in the second case, during political campaigns, elected officials seeking re-election tend to use state resources to boost their popularity.

⁴ Ecuador has a dollarized economy. For reference, the national minimum wage in Ecuador is \$350 dollars, illustrating how inadequate a payment of \$60 per month is.

Safety

Residents of 50 Casas experience a heightened level of insecurity compared to other neighborhoods, including other informal *barrios*, in Esmeraldas. The most common crimes are petty theft, home robberies, and the occasional youth gang skirmish. However, long-time residents of the neighborhood noted that the insecurity they witnessed in 2018 was nothing compared to what it was 10 years prior. According to them, organized crime was a serious issue before, and gun violence between rival gangs was common. “You could not even sit outside your house in peace because bullets could start flying any minute. Those young ones were a real terror then, there are still some *bandidos* (bandits) left, of course, and they are the ones we keep looking out for, but the really dangerous ones are all locked up now, and the ones left don’t have as much control over the place. They will still rob your house or take your cell phone, but deaths are less common,” said Carmen, a long-time resident, in an interview.

Most interviewees reported having had something stolen while walking in the neighborhood or waiting at the bus stop, while many had also experienced a home robbery. The neighbors noted that, for the most part, they felt somewhat safe in their neighborhood especially because of the acquaintanceships and friendships they had developed over time. According to Auri, a neighborhood organizer, there were ways to safely navigate the neighborhood for those who lived there; these included knowing where the main *bandido* hangouts were and avoiding them, knowing all the neighbors well, since they kept an eye out for each other, and walking in pairs or groups, especially for women at night. Auri noted that the neighborhood was truly dangerous for outsiders unfamiliar with the areas and the individuals they should stay away from. Another strategy the neighbors adopted to avoid burglaries was to make sure that there was always someone home. If every member of a household had to go out at the same time, they asked neighbors to keep an eye on their homes.

Neighbors also rely on communal security groups. A few long-time residents mentioned in interviews that they had used this strategy to protect their homes when the neighborhood had just been established; at the time, they faced a variety of threats such as outsiders who claimed ownership of the land. Later, in 2018, they again used this strategy to keep construction crews safe while they paved a part of the neighborhood’s main road. After years of protesting to demand that their main road be paved, the local government finally sent a construction crew to begin the project. After a few days of work, the workers were robbed and stripped of all their belonging while in the neighborhood. After the incident, the work crew refused to continue working there because they felt unsafe. The neighborhood association convened a meeting with the crew and assured the workers that the association would make sure they were safe while working in the area. The neighbors then organized into groups of five, who kept watch over the workers from the moment they entered the neighborhood, until they left.

Fig. 2 Communal house in the neighborhood of La Madera, in Buenos Aires, Argentina

La Madera, Buenos Aires, Argentina

La Madera is a squatter settlement located in the southern part of the Conurbano Bonaerense.⁵ Most of its 5,160 residents (roughly 1,140 households) are poor. According to the last available figures, 55% of the population is below the official poverty line. More than half of the households have no titles of their homes and/or the land where they live. Living conditions are extremely precarious: a third of the households have no access to water inside of their homes, a third of them are overcrowded (more than three persons per room), and most homes have neither sewer nor gas connections.

Since the barrio's inception in 2001, residents' strategies to secure shelter, obtain food, and deal with interpersonal violence have relied on a combination of (more or less contentious) collective action, patronage networks, state aid, and mutual aid networks. We describe them below (Fig. 2).

⁵ The Conurbano Bonaerense is an area comprised of 33 districts that surround the city of Buenos Aires. Roughly 14 million people reside in the Conurbano. Although geographically small (just 0.5 percent of the national territory), 29 percent of the total population live there and 40 percent of its residents fall below the national poverty line.

Shelter

Since the mid-nineties, the Government of the Province of Buenos Aires had been planning a public housing complex in the area that today is La Madera. Towards the end of 1999 construction stopped and rumors abounded about the illegal appropriation of the funds destined for its completion. In March 2000, residents of the neighboring area (Barrio El Tala) together with future beneficiaries of the half-finished houses occupied the land assigned to the housing complex and the area adjacent to them. Future settlers found out about the imminent land invasion through word of mouth among friends and relatives. Leaders of the unemployed movement (locally known as *piqueteros*)⁶ and members of the Peronist Party, who at the time were the opposition, organized the takeover. The testimonies of those who participated, either as occupants and/or as leaders, speak of the extensive accumulated organizational experience—several had already participated in, or had relatives who had been part of, other land occupations of both private and public lands.

Squatters knew (or identified those who knew) how to set the boundaries for each private plot, how to open up the streets and dig trenches so water could flow (“Everything we did, we did a *pulmón*, we got together with other neighbors during weekends and we built the sidewalks”), how to demarcate and reserve plots for public spaces (the main square, the future school and health center), how to confront the police who wanted to evict them (“We would put the kids in front of the mounted police so they couldn’t attack... we went through hell.... When the bulldozers came to try to destroy our tents...”), how to evade the police siege so they could bring in building materials, and how to negotiate with government authorities.

Those who were present in the land invasion remember that “all this was like an empty field ... it was all mud...up to your knee,” “the bridges to enter the neighborhood through the creek were made of wood or used tires, bridges of terror [we called them], you were afraid to go through.” Lucía (58) summarizes the beginnings of La Madera: “It was hard to level this plot (so it didn’t flood). Truckloads and truckloads of rubble, dirt, a lot. But, hey, it was a struggle ... we had no water. We had to go and find it on the other side (across the creek), and when it rained the mud covered our boots. It was tough. We cleaned *el barrio*, we cut reeds, the tall grasses, with a machete. So many things we did...” “Two years after we took over, you didn’t recognize the neighborhood. It improved a lot”, Julio (61) tells us. And every resident we spoke with agrees: “It was a huge progress.” The shared view about progress refers mainly to public infrastructure and facilities: the elementary school, the community and health center, the plaza, some paved streets, the sidewalks, street lights, public water, and the concrete bridges to cross over the creeks that came to replace the “bridges of terror.”

Neighbors tend to associate certain improvements with specific municipal or provincial administrations. Additionally, they recall that “progress” was the outcome of their own “struggles,” the actions of a particular neighborhood broker (a *puntero*) who “got resources for the neighborhood” or, just as importantly, of a mix of

⁶ On the trajectory and actions of the piquetero movement see Perez (2018a, b) and Rossi (2017).

protest and brokerage – as in the many rallies organized by the *puntero* to demand a school, health center, and/or state aid programs. In other words, strategies to obtain land, build private shelter, and public infrastructure and facilities (streets, bridges, sidewalks, lighting, elementary school, community and health center) combine personalized political networks and collective action. Contention was sometimes more transgressive – as in the squatting – and at other times less disruptive – as in the rallies organized to claim a building for the local school.

Food

Soup kitchens, both private and publicly funded, were quite common throughout La Madera before the COVID-19 pandemic, and they became even more widespread since its onset. Children and some adults ate their lunch and sometimes even dinner in these *comedores*. After the onset of pandemic restrictions, they picked up their cooked meals and took them home. During weekdays, the state distributed food to elementary school students and their families at the local school. Local brokers and churches also gave away “mercadería” (foodstuffs) they obtained through their contacts at the municipal and provincial administrations. State assistance programs also helped residents make ends meet. The Asignación Universal por Hijo (AUH) provided families with \$30 USD per child per month, the Tarjeta Alimentaria provided pregnant women and mothers of one child with \$28 USD (and \$ 42USD to women with two or more children), and, since April 2020, the Ingreso Familiar de Emergencia (IFE) offered each family \$71 USD per month.

Workers with formal employment did not receive the IFE. According to the last available figures (pre-pandemic), 15% of La Madera adults were unemployed. Of those who were employed, most relied on informal jobs, such as construction and delivery services for men, and domestic work for women. Almost every household of the fifteen we surveyed since the onset of the pandemic relied on state aid to stay afloat. This meant that someone within the household received AUH, IFE, and/or some other state aid program in either cash or kind.

In what follows we present the case of Vanesa and Cristian’s household. Although the details may be particular to their case, the many sources they rely on for food illustrate a general pattern in the neighborhood. Most residents of *La Madera* combine low-paid work, state aid, and family networks for survival.

Vanesa (30) and Cristian (32) have three children: Melanie (14) Uma (8) and Byron (3). In 2020, they lived in a house built by the state. During the early 2000s, neighborhood residents who at the time were organized by local political brokers linked to the Peronist party, participated in many rallies and road-blockades demanding public housing. Thanks to collective action and patronage, along with the state’s response to both, they now own the house where they live. Although Vanesa’s household does not need to cover the cost of a mortgage or rent, they still struggle to make ends meet. Cristian works at a slaughterhouse an hour away from home and makes approximately \$190 USD per month. Vanesa receives two monthly payments from state sponsored aid programs: the first payment is of \$71 USD for their three children, and the second is of \$6 USD for food. Thus, roughly a third of the household income comes from state sources.

Additionally, Vanesa cleans her grandmother Catalina's home twice per month – for which she receives between \$4 or \$5 USD for two hours of work. Every two weeks, Elena, Cristian's aunt, provides them with milk, noodles, polenta, rice, and corn oil. Elena works at a state-funded local soup kitchen where she receives food, which she then passes on to Vanessa and Cristian. Elena “has a lot of stuff and she shares,” Vanesa noted. Elena is not the only one that helps them make ends meet. Like most of the families Auyero and Servián interviewed, Vanesa and Cristian's household is part of an extensive network of intensive exchange. Twice a week, Vanesa helps her brother Fernando with the sale of clothing the latter buys in bulk in the city. Fernando often loans her money to buy clothes for the children, and also helps her with food: “I only buy oranges because they are always on sale. That's why I only buy oranges, if you come over and see apples or bananas it's because Fernando came by. I ask him to buy me some potatoes, but he also buys fruit for us,” said Vanesa. Once or twice a week, Vanesa also helps her mother, Rosana, who owns a small bakery, in exchange for which she receives pizza dough and cookies for the kids. Rosana also reciprocates with clothes and sneakers for Vanessa's children. During the pandemic, Vanesa has not only relied on family members to obtain food. With a portion of the cash Cristian brings home every two weeks, she runs a little store in front of her house where she sells toiletries and cleaning products. She makes an average of \$2 a day which she spends on meals for the family: “What I earn, I spend on food. We don't eat too much meat. We eat mainly chicken and noodles... every now and then I make a little more and I buy *milanesas*.⁷”

Along with food, recurrent expenses include paying for internet, cell phones, the gas canister to cook, and the parochial school their children attend – arguably the most important expense aside from food. For perspective, slightly over 10% of their income goes to tuition (roughly US\$30 per month). As of February 2021, they owe US\$235 to the school, a debt towards which they make small payments each time Vanessa receives her welfare check. We highlight this point because, contrary to bolstering lassitude, a critique that conservative writers have launched against welfare programs throughout the Americas (Fernández-Kelly 2015), Vanessa and many of the neighbors we interviewed in La Madera, show us that welfare payments are often used to cover the cost of their children's education. People like Vanessa and Cristian, deposit their hopes for social mobility in education– if not their own, that of their children. State aid is thus a component in poor people's strategies not just to ‘stay afloat’ but also to ‘thrive,’ thus contributing to both simple and expanded reproduction.

Safety

“They already robbed me about 40 times” Daniel (32) told us in an interview. “Do you know how ugly it is to cross the bridge at five in the morning? Everything is dark, they come out from under the bridge, from the side, they take everything out of you, they hit you... I have seen many people robbed in front of me and I turned

⁷ Traditional breaded beef cutlets.

back... you have to go with your heart in your mouth and there is no lighting. Nothing at all." The vast majority of our interviewees had been victims of assault on public roads at least once. A minority few told us that they had been "lucky" and had not directly experienced violence, although close relatives had: "They stole the horses my son-in-law uses to pull the cart to scavenge.... Luckily, we recovered one," "My son got his shoes and jacket stolen," "ugly things happen here (in terms of) security..." Direct or indirect victims, all, however, reported feeling that, in terms of public safety, they are at the mercy of what each day brings. Constant attacks against their physical integrity did not seem to surprise them.

Persistent robberies were not confined to public spaces, but also occurred inside homes. Soledad (28), for example, had her gas cylinder (which she purchases once a month for \$4 USD and uses to cook) and cell phone stolen one morning when she left to pick up her daughters from school: "When they rob you, you feel like they will be coming back." Soledad was not the only one who suffered the theft of personal belongings from her home, nor was she the only one who knew the thieves personally—as we heard on countless occasions, victims and perpetrators often knew each other or knew of family or friends they have in common.

Residents had an "explanation" for the surrounding violence. "It's ugly, because they can hurt you for nothing, because the kids are drugged ..." Phrases like those of Mariluz (38) were related to us, with minimal variations, countless times. All the neighbors associated assaults and robberies with the psychopharmacological effects of drugs, often in combination with alcohol, that youth in the neighborhood consumed. From the point of view of the neighbors, which on this issue was practically unanimous, the ingestion of drugs (including paco, cocaine, ecstasy or pills combined with alcohol) irritated, excited, enraged, or emboldened "the kids"—and these emotional states translated into violent behaviors.⁸

Repeated expressions of fear, helplessness, and futility in the face of threats of physical violence co-existed with, at times futile, attempts to mitigate the danger they and their loved ones faced. Neighbors organized their daily routines in an attempt to avoid navigating the streets alone – even more so at night time when their potential perpetrators ("the kids") were more likely to strike. Residents frequently told us that they tried to stay indoors as much as possible. If and when venturing outside, they planned for a family member to stay at home so that household belongings were safe. They also relied on family members to accompany them as they ran errands within the neighborhood or as they left for work or study.

Excerpt from Sofía's diary (edited for clarity)

August 2019. Yesterday night my brother was waiting for me at the bus stop (four blocks from home). I came back at 11.15 PM, had classes until late. We said hi and two seconds later, we were surrounded. Three kids. Two of them were wielding knives, a third had a gun. "The cell phone!" That's all I heard. I panicked because I had it inside my backpack and I thought I wasn't going to

⁸ Known as *bazuco* in Colombia, *baserolo* in Ecuador, and *mono* in Chile, *paco* is a cheap, highly addictive form of cocaine.

Fig. 3 Houses in the neighborhood of Acatzingo, in Mexico City, Mexico

be able to reach to it. I thought they were going to hurt me. One of them hit me on my wrist when he reached out to grab the cellphone. They also took my backpack and ran away. When it was over, I noticed that my brother had lost his jacket, his t-shirt, and his sneakers.

Acatzingo, Mexico City, Mexico

The Comunidad Habitacional Acatzingo is an autonomous housing cooperative in Mexico City's peripheries, home to around 5,000 residents. The community is the oldest and largest of the eight belonging to the Organización Popular Francisco Villa de Izquierda Independiente (OPFVII), a socialist organization seeking to build power by building self-reliant communities based on practices of collective decision making, solidarity, and mutual aid. Located in Iztapalapa, notorious for being one of the city's poorest and highest crime boroughs, Acatzingo displays little of the insecurity and material degradation of the built environment that characterizes the surrounding area. Passing through the community gates, one leaves behind narrow streets, dangling wires, and unfinished concrete. Inside, buried electrical cables give community members an unobstructed view of wide, quiet streets lined with carefully tended greenery and colorful two-story houses. The community boasts parks, greenhouses, a pavilion for general assemblies, a library, and a medical clinic. Despite the community's gates, this is hardly the secured enclave of wealth and privilege the term gated community evokes. *The Panchos*, as the residents call themselves, come from the humblest sections of Mexico City's working class, the majority scraping

by as subway vendors, taxi drivers, domestic laborers, or toiling in other informal jobs. Rather than a reflection of wealth, their neighborhood is, as residents proudly explain, a testament to nearly three decades of collective struggle to build what they call "dignified lives."

Similar to what we've observed in *La Madera* in Argentina and 50 Casas in Ecuador, the Panchos have relied on diverse strategies to secure shelter, obtain food, and deal with insecurity. From the community's origins thirty years ago as a squatter encampment to its status today as a housing cooperative, these strategies have included collective action, communal labor, and mutual aid networks. However, unlike the previous two settlements, the residents of Acapatzingo have been excluded from patronage networks due to their refusal to work with political parties and thus rely more extensively on contentious collective action to access state resources (Fig. 3).

Shelter

Acapatzingo began in 1994 as a land invasion organized by politicized squatters. The former quarry filled with rubble was, according to Antonio, "so ugly it made you want to cry." Yet, beyond the rubble, the squatters saw the possibility of a home for their families. Over the next few years, hearing from friends, relatives, or coworkers, families arrived and built their "*modulos*," provisional housing made with low-cost materials like cinderblocks and tin roofing. In 1996, following an internal conflict, the encampment became a cooperative.

While most squatters were young families with small children and a shared need for housing, their circumstances varied widely. Some, like Valente, a migrant from Veracruz, moved to Acapatzingo with his wife and two children after being violently evicted from a nearby ecological reserve. Others joined to escape the condition of living "*arrimado*" – living rent-free in the crowded homes of friends or relatives. Women were often instrumental in getting their families to join the community, eager to leave the overcrowded and contentious homes of their husbands' extended families. Finally, some joined because they simply no longer could afford to live in the city center due to rising rents and high unemployment.

By joining Acapatzingo, the new arrivals became Panchos,⁹ participants in a social movement that emerged in 1988 from the radical wing of the Urban Popular

⁹ The Panchos take their name from the Frente Popular Francisco Villa (FPFV), founded in 1988. Today, Acapatzingo is one of the eight communities that make up the Organizacion Popular Francisco Villa de Izquierda Independiente (OPFVII), one of several organizations to emerge from internal splits in the FPFVI. The FPFV was just one of the many organizations that emerged from Mexico City's Urban Popular Movement, which had hundreds of thousands of members at its peak following the 1985 earthquake which greatly exacerbated popular demand for housing. Alongside the FPFV, the most prominent organizations at the time included Asamblea de Barrios, the Union de Colonías Populares, and the Unión Popular Revolucionaria Emiliano Zapata. While these later organizations largely abandoned practices of self-organization and contentious forms of collective action embraced by the Panchos upon integration into political parties and civil society in the 1990s, they continue to be central to expressions of popular politics in Mexico City to this day. For a history of the Urban Popular Movement and its transformations in the late 80 s and early 90 s, see Moreno Galván (2013) and Haber (2009).

Movement. While similar organizations gradually embraced electoral politics as a vehicle to secure housing and other amenities, the Panchos refused to work with political parties, deeply critical of how clientelism undermines poor people's struggles. Instead, they remained firmly committed to the organizational autonomy, collective decision-making practices, and contentious collective action that characterized earlier expressions of the Urban Popular Movement.

Beyond simply meeting the need for housing, the Panchos see the construction of communities for the urban poor as the first step towards building an alternative socialist society. As David, a prominent community organizer, told Sam, "Housing, as a deeply felt necessity, is the pretext to initiate the struggle, but it doesn't end there. Political consciousness doesn't end when you get the keys to your house." This commitment to the construction of an alternative society is seen in the active participation in the communal structures of self-organization: from the monthly general assembly, rotating community guard, and involvement in the eight commissions that organize communal life.

Without ties to political parties, the community relied heavily on contentious collective action to gain access to credit from Mexico City's housing agency to construct their homes. According to the cooperative's documentation, in the seven years it took to secure the housing credit, the community participated in 205 marches, sit-ins, and rallies. As Monica put it, "For us, our weapon is our voice. Through marches, sit-ins, rallies, we have been able to achieve everything we have today."

While the credit to build the houses was secured from the government through collective action, the community itself oversaw the planning and construction process. Collective labor such as digging ditches and unloading materials lowered construction costs. These savings allowed the construction of larger houses and wider streets that deviated from standard subsidized housing and set aside space for a health clinic, a radio station, and a cultural center.

Food

Most residents of Acapatzingo start working outside the home by age 13, and it is primarily through earnings from this work that families purchase food. While some community members have more stable waged work, most of the community works in the informal economy as domestic laborers, delivery workers, taxi drivers, and mobile vendors. Most residents conduct the bulk of their shopping in a small but labyrinthine market adjacent to the community. Most vendors sell food – vegetables, tortillas, eggs, dried staples like beans and rice, poultry, herbs, and spices. In addition to this market, many community members sell food out of their homes like tortillas, candy, baked goods, and snacks. There are also numerous street vendors selling tacos and quesadillas and several small convenience stores that sell cigarettes, credit for pre-paid cellphones, sodas, and packaged food within walking distance. Due to the consumption of processed foods, street food, and soft drinks, there is a high prevalence of obesity and diabetes.

The health commission, operating out of a two-story house designated as a volunteer-run health clinic, addresses these diet-related conditions by monitoring residents' blood pressure and glucose levels and organizing exercise classes and

nutrition workshops. Another effort by the community to address food access issues is the small urban farm run by the agriculture commission. Made up of two greenhouses and a small orchard in the center of the community, the urban farm produces vegetables and fruit, which are sold door to door at a fraction of their market price. While the small farm has an impressive yield, it meets only a tiny fraction of the community's food needs. Thus, while Mirella, a member of the agricultural commission, dreams of one day "harvesting enough food to feed the whole community," she describes the farm as part of an educational project, teaching community members about nutrition and the value of agricultural labor.

The pandemic greatly impacted the economic livelihood of many residents of the community, particularly those in the informal economy. To deal with the growing issue of food insecurity, the neighborhood established a community kitchen that served a low-cost breakfast, lunch, and dinner to around 50 families. Run by the community's brigades, the community kitchen substantially lowered costs by purchasing ingredients in bulk, using produce from the farm, and using a sliding scale to subsidize meals for unemployed families.

Safety

Acapatzingo is a neighborhood where people leave their doors unlocked for visitors to stop by, where parents feel comfortable letting their children play outside alone, and where, well past dark, small groups of all ages can be seen enjoying each other's company. This degree of safety is a testament to the community's self-organized security practices and is especially remarkable when considering that the community is located in Iztapalapa, Mexico City's highest crime borough. In 2019, for example, more kidnappings, robberies, murders, femicides, and incidents of rape and sexual violence occurred in Iztapalapa than in any other part of the city (González 2020, 335–43). Many residents have direct experience with this violence, with stories about being robbed at knife or gun-point as they walked or took collective busses to the subway station a mile from the community. Josefina, who spoke to Sam about her experiences participating in the rotating community guard, said that it is not uncommon to see people make the sign of the cross when they safely return to the community.

Residents themselves provide security in Acapatzingo. As David told Sam, "We don't let the police enter because we make our own security." In the earliest days of the settlement, threats from rival squatter groups and the theft of construction materials led the community to build a fence around the perimeter and establish nightly bonfires to keep watch, which are remembered fondly today. To respond to threats, community members to this day carry with them a whistle and a baton, ready to assemble *en masse* to collectively address security threats. This system, which allows any community member to alert and rapidly mobilize the rest of the community, enables the community to address violence without relying on a specialized armed security force.

As the community grew, it replaced the fences with walls topped in many places with barbed wire, and the bonfires were replaced with two gated entrances. Today, guard duty rotates daily between the 28 brigades, whose members divide the day

into eight-hour shifts. This means that each family takes part in a guard shift once every 28 days. During the day, guards sit at the gates and monitor traffic. Residents are free to come and go, but guests must be met at the gate by a host from the community, and vehicles leaving the community are searched to prevent theft. Incidences of teenagers from outside Acapatzingo jumping the fence to drink, smoke, and occasionally steal have led to establishing a nocturnal foot patrol around the perimeter. This patrol also enforces community agreements like a 10 PM youth curfew, restrictions on public drinking, and quiet hours.

In addition to protecting the community from external threats, the security commission plays an integral role in addressing interpersonal conflict and harm within the community. At a general assembly in April 2021, for example, the commission reported that they had broken up a violent brawl at a house party and responded to a father who blew his whistle for help when his 16-year-old son pulled a knife on him for trying to send his friends home late at night.

Beyond de-escalation, the security commission works to address the harm caused by interpersonal violence, following practices of community justice informed by mechanisms of conflict resolution in indigenous communities and principles of transformative justice. Through mediation, the security commission determines sanctions to be ratified by the general assembly, which can include restitution, communal labor, counseling, or other behavioral changes, and, in the most serious cases, expulsion. In the case of the 16-year-old who pulled the knife on his father, for example, the commission recommended to the general assembly that for a year, the teenager see a psychologist, refrain from drinking alcohol, and be required to take a Saturday night guard shift.

While Acapatzingo is not free of interpersonal violence, often the result of domestic conflicts or the use of drugs and alcohol, this system of communal security and conflict resolution means that the consequences of this violence don't spiral out of control. With the whistle, residents have recourse to a rapid and effective means of communal de-escalation and conflict resolution. Furthermore, by resolving conflicts internally and without the police, these communal mechanisms of conflict resolution avoid recourse to state intervention that, due to their intermittent, punitive, and contradictory character, often exacerbate interpersonal violence in the surrounding area.

This self-organized system of communal security has also allowed the community to respond to emerging external threats without relying on the police. In May 2020, a new criminal organization active in the surrounding area sent two armed men to deliver a letter demanding money from the community. In response to this attempted extortion, the community convened an emergency general assembly where they collectively decided to destroy the letter without reading it and to add an additional patrol through the community.

Thanks to this self-organized system of security, residents feel a sense of safety and peace in the community that they don't feel outside. As one resident and long-time member of the security commission, Antonio, told Sam, "When I pass through the gates, I feel safe because I know that nothing will happen to me. I know that my children are safe and protected when I leave for work and that everyone is here to help." Referring to the feeling of safety in the community, David told Sam, "Safety

isn't something that is measured, it is felt. Living in peace is part of a dignified life. That we are able to feel this way thanks to our organization shows that we can solve our problems, that things can be done in a different way."

Discussion

The empirical question posed by the Spanish title of Larrissa Lomnitz's classic study of a Mexican shantytown – *How do the Marginalized Survive?* – remains indispensable to the analysis of informal communities in Latin America today. It is a question that moves beyond macro-level analysis of structural constraint and material deprivation to instead focus on the diversity of strategies by which the urban poor solve the everyday problems of individual and collective reproduction. The notion of strategy has the advantage of encapsulating the dialectic interactions between poor people's subjective but not individual decisions and their objective conditions of existence with all the attendant risks and uncertainties (Eguía and Ortale 2007; Fontaine and Schlumbohm 2000; Hintze 2004; Lamaison and Bourdieu 1986).

In addition to classic and contemporary studies' emphasis on reciprocal exchange and mutual aid, our paper highlighted the role of patronage networks and grassroots collective action as central to the strategies by which the urban poor cope with scarcity and improve their life chances. Faced with resource-deprivation "people cast wide webs of connection, obligation, and pressure" (Phillips 2018, 3). Through "acts of both conflict and cooperation, and through networks of both inequality and interdependence" (ibidem, 3) they search for means to solve pressing needs. The incessant quest for food, shelter, and safety sometimes brings people together in more or less horizontal relationships. At other times, this same search either draws them towards governments, or away from them.¹⁰

The main objective of this article was exploratory. Drawing on ethnographic data collected in three informal communities, each with a history of squatting, we empirically document how the poor rely on networks of reciprocal exchange, state aid, protest, collective action, and political brokerage to survive. While the differing reliance on diverse strategies attests to the historically contingent development of these communities and to diverse structures of political opportunities, we found a remarkable continuity in the difficulties their residents confronted and in some of the problem-solving strategies they resorted to.

Together with securing access to housing and food (the primary focus of studies of poor people's subsistence strategies), the issue of "*la inseguridad*" (insecurity) was a central concern of these three communities. What do we gain if we incorporate "lack of personal safety" as one of the defining features of marginal existence to which Lomnitz (1993, 89) referred to in her classic study? An analytical focus on ways of dealing with violence alongside ways of acquiring shelter and food affords

¹⁰ A now classic statement on the intricate ways in which deprivation generates these horizontal and vertical, cooperative and conflictive, entanglements was made by anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) in her masterful ethnography of suffering in Brazil.

a better, more comprehensive, view of the relational work needed for survival. Our findings show variation in the web of relations marginalized residents knit as they seek to confront daily dangers. In La Matera, they count on close family members to seek protection. In 50 Casas, local mechanisms of informal social control – based on a shared history – are at work. In Acapatzingo, residents protect themselves through collective organizing. At a time when some of the scholarship has been questioning the extent to which reciprocal networks are effective in poor people’s problem-solving (González de la Rocha 2001; 2020; Lubbers et al. 2020) attention to how they relationally address safety issues shows the enduring relevance of webs of “kin and friends” (Stack 1983) and of other more collective means of meeting survival needs.

This – the operation of proximate relations working as webs of communication about the potential whens, wheres, and whos of violence – is hardly a Latin American phenomenon (Auyero and Kilanski 2015). Ethnographic work in marginalized spaces in the United States describes similar relational processes in the face of street violence (Harding 2010; Ralph 2014). To provide just one particularly luminous example: in his detailed nine-year long study of five poor neighborhoods in Bronx, Brooklyn, and Los Angeles, Sanchez-Jankowski (2016, 99) notes that information about the time, place, circumstances, and potential perpetrators of violence traveled through local networks, sometimes in the form of gossip, serving residents to navigate treacherous public spaces. Residents of poor neighborhoods knew that “deadly violence with the use of lethal weapons was associated with late evening and morning activity. It was more likely to occur in areas of drug sales and away from areas regularly patrolled by the police. Fighting would occur anywhere but was more likely in areas of greater socializing among residents, such as common areas where sports were played, laundry rooms, and parking lots, at the times when the most socializing occurred. Hence, even in times of considerable violence, this predictability permitted residents to avoid or lessen their exposure to it.”

Conclusions and Tasks Ahead

Research in both Latin America and the United States shows that both relations with kin and friends and larger community networks play a key role in how the poor cope with surrounding insecurity. Given these commonalities, future work both north and south of the border needs to examine not only the kind of ties (dense, weak, disposable, affective, instrumental, etc.) developed and sustained for survival but also the types of (material and informational) resources that travel through them.

Our investigation shows that poor people’s survival strategies are deeply imbricated with routine political processes – sometimes through patronage networks, other times through community organizing or protest actions, or a combination of them. Under what structural, political, and cultural conditions marginalized residents are able to avoid being pulled into less horizontal and more vertical and hierarchical networks is something that merits further investigation.

The strategies explored in this article all share a pragmatic attention to the resolution of immediate material concerns. This pragmatism exceeds the domain of immediate necessity and aims to build communities that thrive and in which “dignified”

lives are possible. In this sense, the statement we repeatedly heard in La Matera (“it’s all politics”), and, with variations, in the other two sites, can be read in two ways. On one hand, the everyday practices of the urban poor are inextricably entangled with both formal and informal political processes. On the other hand, poor people’s strategies are pragmatic means by which they aspire to improve their life chances and in so doing, address the formal and substantial manifestations of inequality and injustice in durable ways. Separating “survival” from “making progress,” all our cases show, is an artificial division that does not resonate with poor people’s daily struggles.

This raises two additional questions crucial for further research. First, there is the question of habituation and attachment to particular survival strategies. As strategies become taken-for-granted habitual modes of solving problems, attachments to them become routinized. Rather than serving as vehicles of transformative and durable change, reliance on these strategies risks cementing attachments to ways of life that reproduce structures of domination and harm (Auyero and Benzecry 2017). The question then becomes whether attachment to particular strategies, over a longer time frame, continue to make a material difference in the lives of the urban poor or whether this routinization becomes an obstacle in the path toward a dignified life they once seemed to offer. A second empirical question addresses the resilience or fragility of particular life strategies in the face of deep crisis and transition. The pandemic powerfully illustrated how the life chances of the poor are disproportionately impacted by crisis. Economic, social, and ecological crises – from political instability and increasing urban insecurity to water shortages and climate-fueled migration – all herald profound changes in the lives of the urban poor and significant shifts in the nature of urban governance. Which strategies or combinations of strategies will prove effective in responding to the circumstances’ challenges and opportunities?

Further ethnographic attention to the survival strategies of the urban poor is crucial in understanding how these pragmatic and everyday forms of politics will shape the ever-present constraints at the urban margins and the ever-evolving possibilities of a dignified urban life.

Acknowledgements The authors are grateful to activists and residents of Esmeraldas, Ecuador, La Matera, Argentina, and Acapatzingo, Mexico for opening their homes, spending time and sharing stories with them. We are also grateful to Matthew Desmond, Mario Small, Forrest Stuart, Jennifer Scott, and Loïc Wacquant who commented on sections of this paper. We thank Qualitative Sociology editors Claudio Benzecry and Andrew Deener and anonymous reviewers.

Funding Funding for this project was provided by the Lozano Long Institute for Latin American Studies at the University of Texas, the National Science Foundation, and the Fulbright commission.

References

- Abello Colak, Alexandra, Heidy Cristina Gómez Ramírez, and María Isela Quintero Valencia. 2014. Iniciativas comunitarias y su incidencia en la seguridad humana. In *Nuestras voces sobre seguridad humana en Medellín: diálogos sobre seguridad*, 145–84. Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia.
- Adams, Tani Marilena. 2017. How chronic violence affects human development, social relations, and the practice of citizenship: Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. <https://>

- www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/chronic_violence_final_by_tani_adams.pdf. Accessed 10 Nov 2020.
- Álvarez-Rivadulla, María José. 2017. *Squatters and the politics of marginality in Uruguay*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Auyero, Javier. 2000. The logic of clientelism in Argentina: An ethnographic account. *Latin American Research Review* 1: 55–81.
- Auyero, Javier, and Claudio Benzecri. 2017. The practical logic of political domination: Conceptualizing the clientelist habitus. *Sociological Theory* 35 (3): 179–199.
- Auyero, Javier, and Kristine Kilanski. 2015. From ‘making toast’ to ‘splitting apples’: dissecting ‘care’ in the midst of chronic violence. *Theory and Society* 44: 393–414.
- Auyero, Javier, and María Fernanda Berti. 2015. *In Harm’s Way*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Auyero, Javier, Pablo Lapegna, and Fernanda Page Poma. 2009. Patronage politics and contentious collective action: A recursive relationship. *Latin American Politics and Society* 51 (3): 1–3.
- Bayat, Asef. 2013. *Life as politics: How ordinary people change the Middle East*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Burgwal, Gerrit. 2003. *Struggle of the poor: Neighborhood organization and clientelist practice in a Quito squatter settlement*. Amsterdam: Purdue University Press.
- Burwell, Rebecca. 2004. Dónde están los huevos? Surviving in times of economic hardship: Cuban mothers, the state, and making ends meet. *Journal of Poverty* 8 (4): 75–95.
- Camargo Sierra, Angélica Patricia. 2020. Vivienda y estrategias familiares de vida en barrios populares consolidados en Bogotá. *Revista INVI* 35 (98): 101–125.
- Cammett, Melani. 2014. *Compassionate communalism: Welfare and sectarianism in Lebanon*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Collier, David. 1976. *Squatters and oligarchs: Authoritarian rule and policy change in Peru*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cornelius, Wayne A. 1975. *Politics and the migrant poor in Mexico City*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Cravino, María Cristina, and Pablo Ariel Vommaro. 2018. Asentamientos en el sur de la periferia de Buenos Aires: Orígenes, entramados organizativos y políticas de hábitat. *Población y Sociedad* 25 (2): 1–27. <https://ri.conicet.gov.ar/handle/11336/85947>.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2012. Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty. *American Journal of Sociology* 118 (1): 88–133.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2017. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Reprint. New York: Crown.
- Di Nunzio, Marco. 2019. *The act of living: Street life, marginality, and development in urban Ethiopia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Edin, Kathryn, and Laura Lein. 1997. *Making ends meet: How single mothers survive welfare and low-wage work*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Eguía, Amalia, and Susana Ortale. 2007. *Los significados de la pobreza*. Buenos Aires: Biblos.
- Evans, Harriet. 2020. *Beijing from below: Stories of marginal lives in the capital’s center*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.
- Fahlberg, Anjuli, Thomas J. Vicino, Ricardo Fernandes, and Viviane Potiguara. 2020. Confronting chronic shocks: Social Resilience in Rio de Janeiro’s Poor Neighborhoods. *Cities* 99 (April).
- Fernández-Kelly, Patricia. 2015. *The hero’s fight: African Americans in west Baltimore and the shadow of the state*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fischer, Brodwyn, and Bryan McCann, eds. 2014. *Cities from scratch: Poverty and informality in urban Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Fischer, Brodwyn, Bryan McCann, and Javier Auyero, eds. 2014. *Cities from scratch: Poverty and informality in urban Latin America*. Duke University Press.
- Fontaine, Laurence, and Jürgen Schlumbohm. 2000. Household strategies for survival: an introduction. *International Review of Social History* 45 (8): 1–17.
- Godoy, Angelina Snodgrass. 2006. *Popular injustice: Violence, community, and law in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Goldstein, Daniel M. 2012. *Outlawed: Between security and rights in a Bolivian city*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- González, Damián. 2020. Un diagnóstico de la desigualdad socio territorial. Gobierno de la Ciudad de México. <https://www.evalua.cdmx.gob.mx/estudios-e-investigaciones/ciudad-de-mexico-2020-un-diagnostico-de-la-desigualdad-socio-territorial>. Accessed 10 Oct 2020.

- González de la Rocha, Mercedes. 2001. From the resources of poverty to the poverty of resources? The erosion of a survival model. *Latin American Perspectives* 28 (4): 72–100.
- González de la Rocha, Mercedes. 2020. Of morals and markets: Social exchange and poverty in contemporary urban Mexico. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 689 (1): 26–45.
- Gutерock, Thomas M. 1980. *Machine politics in transition: Party and community in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Haber, Paul. 2009. La migración del Movimiento Urbano Popular a la política de partido en el México contemporáneo. *Revista Mexicana De Sociología* 71 (2): 213–245.
- Harding, David J. 2010. *Living the drama: Community, conflict, and culture among inner-city boys*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Harvey, Mark H. 2011. Welfare reform and household survival: The interaction of structure and network strength in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. *Journal of Poverty* 15 (1): 43–64.
- Hintze, Susana. 2004. *Capital social y estrategias de supervivencia: reflexiones sobre el 'capital social de los pobres.'* Políticas sociales y economía social: Debates fundamentales, editado por Claudia Danani. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Altamira.
- Holland, Alisha C. 2017. *Forbearance as redistribution: The politics of informal welfare in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holston, James. 2009. *Insurgent citizenship: Disjunctions of democracy and modernity in Brazil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jarrett, Robin L., Ozge Sensoy Bahar, and Angela Odoms-Young. 2014. 'You just have to build a bridge and get over it': Low-income African American caregivers' coping strategies to manage inadequate food supplies. *Journal of Poverty* 18 (2): 188–219.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, and Steven I. Wilkinson, eds. 2007. *Patrons, clients and policies: Patterns of democratic accountability and political competition*. Illustrated. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lamaison, Pierre, and Pierre Bourdieu. 1986. From rules to strategies: An interview with Pierre Bourdieu. *Cultural Anthropology* 1 (1): 110–120.
- Lapegna, Pablo. 2016. *Soybeans and power: Genetically modified crops, environmental politics, and social movements in Argentina*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Levitsky, Steven. 2003. *Transforming labor-based parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lomnitz, Larissa Adler de. 1993. *¿Cómo sobreviven los marginados?*, 15th ed. México: Siglo XXI de España Editores, S.A.
- Lomnitz, Larissa Adler. 2014. *Networks and marginality: Life in a Mexican shantytown*. New York: Academic Press.
- Lubbers, Miranda J., Mario Luis Small, and Hugo Valenzuela García. 2020. Do networks help people to manage poverty? Perspectives from the field. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 689 (1): 7–25.
- Massidda, Adriana L. 2018. Utopian visions for Buenos Aires shantytowns: Collective imaginaries of housing rights, upgrading and eviction (1956–2013). *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 37 (2): 144–159.
- McCurn, Alexis S. 2020. Surviving the grind: How young Black women negotiate physical and emotional labor in urban space. *Sociological Spectrum* 40 (4): 227–246.
- Merklen, Denis. 1991. *Asentamientos en La Matanza: La terquedad de lo nuestro*. Catálogos Editora.
- Moreno Galván, Felipe de Jesús. 2013. *El Movimiento Urbano Popular en el Valle de México*, 1st ed. México: CDMX: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Moser, Caroline, and Cathy McIlwaine. 2000. *Urban poor perceptions of violence and exclusion in Colombia*. Washington: World Bank Publications.
- Müller, Markus M. 2016. *The punitive city: Privatized policing and protection in neoliberal Mexico*. New York: Zed Books.
- Murphy, Edward. 2014. In and out of the margins: Urban land seizures and homeownership in Santiago, Chile. In *Cities from scratch: Poverty and informality in urban Latin America*, eds. Brodwyn Fischer and Bryan McCann, 68–101. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Newman, Katherine S. 2020. Ties that bind/unwind: The social, economic, and organizational contexts of sharing networks. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 689 (1): 192–201.

- Pearce, Jenny. 2019. Introducción. Un aporte conceptual y empírico para resignificar la seguridad en México. In *Seguridad humana y violencia crónica en México: nuevas lecturas y propuestas desde abajo*, eds. Gema Kloppe Santamaría and Alexandra Abello Colak, 5–33. Mexico: Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México; Miguel Ángel Porrua.
- Penglas, R. Ben. 2014. *Living with insecurity in a Brazilian favela: Urban violence and daily life*. Rutgers University Press.
- Perez, Marcos Emilio. 2018a. Becoming a Piquetero: Working class routines and the development of activist dispositions. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 23 (2): 237–53.
- Perez, Marcos Emilio. 2018b. Institutional strengthening in a receding movement: The trajectory of Piquetero organizations between 2003 and 2015. *Latin American Research Review* 53 (2): 287–302.
- Perlman, Janice. 2011. *Favela: Four decades of living on the edge in Rio de Janeiro*. Illustrated. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Phillips, Kristin. 2018. *An ethnography of hunger: Politics, subsistence, and the unpredictable grace of the sun*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ralph, Laurence. 2014. *Renegade dreams: living through injury in gangland Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Raudenbush, Danielle. 2016. 'I stay by myself': Social support, distrust, and selective solidarity among the urban poor. *Sociological Forum* 31 (4): 1018–1039.
- Raudenbush, Danielle. 2020. *Health care off the books: Poverty, illness, and strategies for survival in urban America*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Rodgers, Dennis, Jo. Beall, and Ravi Kanbur, eds. 2012. *Latin American urban development into the twenty first century: Towards a renewed perspective on the city*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rossi, Federico M. 2017. *The poor's struggle for political incorporation: The Piquetero movement in Argentina*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salahub, Jennifer Erin, Markus Gottsbacher, and John de Boer. 2018. *Social theories of urban violence in the global south: Towards safe and inclusive cities*. Edited by Jennifer Erin Salahub, Markus Gottsbacher, and John de Boer. 1st edition. New York: Routledge.
- Sánchez-Jankowski, Martín. 2016. *Cracks in the pavement*, 1st ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1992. *Death without weeping: the violence of everyday life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Schneider, Cathy. 1995. *Shantytown protest in Pinochet's Chile*. Illustrated. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Sharkey, Patrick. 2018. *Uneasy peace: The great crime decline, the renewal of city life, and the next war on violence*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Singerman, Diane. 1995. *Avenues of participation: Family, politics, and networks in urban quarters of Cairo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Small, Mario Luis. 2004. *Villa Victoria: The transformation of social capital in a Boston barrio*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Small, Mario Luis, and Leah E. Gose. 2020. How do low-income people form survival networks? Routine organizations as brokers. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 689 (1): 89–109.
- Stack, Carol B. 1983. *All our kin: Strategies for survival in a Black community*. New York: Basic Books.
- Svampa, Maristella. 2005. *La sociedad excluyente*. Buenos Aires: Taurus.
- Szwarcberg, Mariela. 2015. *Mobilizing poor voters: Machine politics, clientelism, and social networks in Argentina*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, Charles. 2008. *Contentious performances*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ugarte, Álex, and Jorge Derpic. 2013. Bolivia: Los linchados de El Alto - Revista Anfibia. *Revista Anfibia*. <http://revistaanfibia.com/cronica/bolivia-los-linchados-de-el-alto/>. Accessed Aug 2020.
- Vega, Nohora, Luis Antonio Flores, and Brenda Raquel Velásquez. 2019. Narrativas de la violencia en la colonia Sánchez Taboada en Tijuana: Entre el desamparo y la ciudadanía activa. In *Seguridad humana y violencia crónica en México: Nuevas lecturas y propuestas desde abajo*, eds. Gema Kloppe Santamaría and Alexandra Abello Colak, 103–36. Mexico: Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México; Miguel Ángel Porrua.
- Vommaro, Pablo, and Hélène. Combes. 2019. *El clientelismo político: Desde 1950 hasta nuestros días*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores.
- Wilding, Polly. 2012. *Negotiating boundaries: Gender, violence and transformation in Brazil*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zarazaga, S. J. Rodrigo. 2014. Brokers beyond clientelism: A new perspective through the Argentine case. *Latin American Politics and Society* 56 (3): 23–45.

Zorbaugh, Harvey Warren. 1983. *The Gold Coast and the slum: A sociological study of Chicago's near North side*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Maricarmen Hernández is assistant professor of Sociology at the University of New Mexico.

Sam Law is a doctoral candidate in the department of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin.

Javier Auyero is the Lozano Long Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin.

Authors and Affiliations

Maricarmen Hernández¹ · Samuel Law² · Javier Auyero³

Samuel Law
Sam.law@utexas.edu

Javier Auyero
auyero@austin.utexas.edu

¹ Department of Sociology, University of New Mexico, 915 Roma NE Ste. 1103, Albuquerque, NM 78712, USA

² Department of Anthropology, University of Texas, WCP 4.102, 2201 Speedway Stop C3200, Austin, TX 78712, USA

³ Department of Sociology, University of Texas, 305 E 23rd St. CLA 3.306, Austin, TX 78712, USA